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SUBJECT: GON BAN ON RETRANSMISSION OF FOREIGN NEWS PROGRAMS

CLASSIFIED BY CDA RICK ROBERTS FOR REASONS 1.5 (b) AND (d).

[11](#). (C) The new British High Commission press officer told Abuja IO on April 20 that the High Commission is very unhappy with the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) decision to stop rebroadcasting of all foreign news and programs by Nigerian media, which has had a direct impact on BBC and VOA. While most Nigerians receive VOA material directly via satellite or shortwave radio, BBC relies heavily on local affiliate stations (particularly the AIT television network) to carry their programming.

[12](#). (C) The British High Commission has elevated their demarches regarding this matter to the highest level, said the press officer, but to no avail. The head of the BBC African Division was in country recently to express concern over the ban on their programming. Outgoing British High Commissioner Phillip Thomas broached the subject with President Obasanjo, who reportedly said that he would consider the issue next month. Information Minister Chikelu reportedly told BBC and High Commission officials that the matter would be "sorted out" in short order, but that has not happened. The press officer said the High Commission believes the State Security Service (SSS) is behind the ban.

[13](#). (U) There were two editorials recently in Nigerian newspapers on the ban, one April 20 in the Daily Independent and one April 21 in the Guardian. Both said it was a bad decision that makes the government look like one of the old military regimes in Nigeria.
ROBERTS